big game draw method changes proposed for 2003

If you have any interest in hunting California's big game, it is very important to apply for premium deer, pronghorn antelope, elk and bighorn sheep drawings this year. Your chances of being selected in future years may be influenced by whether you submit an application this year.

During the next several months, the Fish and Game Commission will evaluate various big game tag drawing methods, with the goal of adopting an alternative method for the 2003/2004 hunting season. Beginning in 2003, it is proposed that tagholders for many of California's big game hunts will be selected using a point-based draw system. In anticipation of the Commission adopting a point-based draw system later this year, the Department of Fish and Game has proposed to award one point to unsuccessful applicants for premium deer (based on first choice, one-deer tag application), pronghorn antelope, elk and bighorn sheep tags in the 2002 Big Game Draw.

Various drawing methods have been used in other states, including Bonus Points, Preference Points, Modified Preference Points, and the Draw-by-Choice system currently used in California. These methods involve generating one or more random numbers for each applicant. Success of applicants is based on their random numbers and/or points relative to other applicants. There are subtle differences between the various drawing methods, which could significantly influence the chance of being drawn for your favorite deer zone or once-in-a-lifetime hunt. A brief summary of the various drawing methods is provided on page 33. Interested hunters should become familiar with the pros and cons associated with each method.

When the number of applicants exceeds the quota for a hunt, no drawing method will satisfy each hunter. But some point-based draw systems can provide an advantage to persistent applicants and still make it possible for a first-time or re-entering hunter to be drawn.

Keep in mind that the Commission has <u>not</u> selected a particular method for 2003, or determined which big game species will be included in the new drawing method. Specific details and procedures need to be established (for example–how party applications are processed, how points are gained or lost, and how points are tracked). Public input is very important in the Commission's decision making process, and you are encouraged to contact the Commission in writing with your recommendations or comments (see contact information below). As the Commission evaluates various drawing methods, periodic status reports will be provided in the Department of Fish and Game's Tracks publication and our website.

For a free subscription to Tracks, send your name and mailing address via e-mail to: pmontalv@dfg.ca.gov, or write to:

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You can view the proposed regulations at the Commission's Website at:
www.dfg.ca.gov/fg_comm/index.html

For more information, please contact the Department's Wildlife Programs Branch at (916) 445-3406.

pros and cons of various big game drawing methods

Drawing Type	How It Works	Pros	Cons
Draw-by-Choice (Current System)	● All hunt applications are sorted by the hunter's first choice hunt ● Hunters are awarded tags, in order of lowest random number, until quotas are filled or all applications have been processed ● For deer, remaining applications are sorted by second and third choice until all hunts are filled or until all applications are processed	● All hunters who have selected the same hunts compete together in the same draw ● This is the current draw system, no additional cost for implementation	● 80-100% of all big game tags will be issued in the first round of the draw, making hunters' second and third choices largely moot ● Over time, will not significantly improve a hunter's odds of getting drawn for high-demand hunts ● Hunters who were unsuccessful in previous years drawings have no advantage over hunters that were successful
Preference Points	● Each year that a hunter is unsuccessful in the drawing for their first choice tag, they receive a "preference point" ● Tags for each hunt are awarded on the basis of who has the lowest random number and the most preference points	● Hunters who have applied the longest without being drawn for their first choice receive preference ● Hunters can better predict how long they will have to wait for the tag they want ● Hunters are rewarded for their persistence	● Discourages first-time and re-entering hunters from applying ● May take years for hunters to build up enough points to draw high-demand hunts (hunters may become impatient and drop out) ● More expensive and labor-intensive; may result in increased drawing fees
Modified Preference Points	● Each year that a hunter is unsuccessful in the drawing for their first choice tag, they receive a "preference point" ● A portion of the tags for each hunt is awarded through a preference point drawing, the remaining tags are awarded through a random drawing ● Hunters not successful in the preference draw have a chance of being drawn in the random drawing	● Hunters can better predict how long they will have to wait for a tag ● Hunters are rewarded for their persistence ● Will not discourage first time and re-entering hunters from applying	● Hunters may have to wait longer for high-demand hunts than through a preference point system ● A tag quota split would be necessary, which may lead to controversy ● More expensive and labor-intensive; may result in increased drawing fees
Bonus Points	● Each year that a hunter is unsuccessful in the drawing for their first choice hunt, an additional "bonus point" is gained ● Each applicant is assigned a random number for each "bonus point" ● Lowest random number, gives the hunter the best chance of being drawn	● Overtime, may improve a hunter's odds of being drawn for some hunts ● Possible for a first-time hunter to receive a tag ● Hunters may be rewarded for persistence	● A first-time hunter could get drawn over someone who has earned many bonus points ● May take years for hunters to get drawn (unpredictable) ● Exceptionally unlucky hunters may NEVER get drawn ● More expensive and labor-intensive; may result in increased drawing fees